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Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children

Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Summary

The present annual report builds upon the recommendation of the General Assembly in its resolution 67/152 that the Secretary-General extend the mandate of the Special Representative for a further period of three years and takes into account the request of the Assembly that the Special Representative continue to submit annual reports to the Assembly and the Human Rights Council on the activities undertaken in the fulfilment of her mandate, including information on her field visits and on the progress achieved and the challenges remaining on the violence against children agenda.

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I. Mandate and strategic priorities

1. The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/141. The Special Representative assumed her position in September 2009 (as noted in document A/HRC/13/46).

2. In its resolution 67/152 of 20 December 2012, the General Assembly recommended that the Secretary-General extend the mandate of the Special Representative for a further period of three years, and decided that for the effective performance of the mandate and the sustainability of its core activities, the mandate should be funded from the regular budget starting from the biennium 2014-2015.

3. The present report marks the start of a new phase. It builds upon progress achieved and lessons learned in the first three years in advancing implementation of the strategic recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children (hereinafter referred to as "the study") (see A/61/299 and A/62/209); and it takes into account the priorities identified by the Special Representative for the second term of her mandate (see A/67/230, paras. 100-110). These include mainstreaming the recommendations of the study in the national policy agenda; addressing emerging concerns; tackling violence across children's life cycles, with priority attention to the most vulnerable children; and promoting children's protection from violence as a priority in the development agenda (see box I).

Box I
Role of the Special Representative

The Special Representative is a high-profile global independent advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, acting as a bridge-builder and a catalyst for action across sectors and settings where violence against children may occur. She promotes the protection of children from violence as a human rights imperative, making use of mutually supportive strategies, including advocacy; the promotion of international, regional and national consultations to advance progress, identify good practices and promote cross-fertilization of experience; the hosting of expert consultations; the development of thematic studies and information materials; and the organization of field missions. In promoting progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children, the Special Representative has placed a particular emphasis on those with a time-bound target, namely:

(a) The development in each State of a national comprehensive strategy to prevent and respond to all forms of violence;

(b) The introduction of an explicit legal ban on all forms of violence against children, in all settings;

(c) The consolidation of data and research on violence against children.

II. Consolidating progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children

4. This report reviews major developments in sustaining and scaling up efforts to protect children from violence. It builds upon the progress made in implementation of the recommendations of the study and takes into account the global survey on violence against children, conducted by the Special Representative in collaboration with a wide range of partners. The preliminary results of the global survey were highlighted in the 2012 Special Representative's report to the General Assembly (A/67/230, paras. 50-99) and are addressed in greater detail in a separate publication.

5. The findings indicate a promising process of change. There is ever-growing ratification of treaties on children's protection; violence against children is gaining visibility in national agendas, with increasing legislative action, policy interventions and information campaigns to safeguard children's freedom from violence; and promising initiatives help to capture the magnitude and incidence of this phenomenon and its impact on children's daily lives and enhance participation of children in advocacy and decision-making processes.

6. At the same time, progress remains uneven and more vigorous efforts are needed to develop a national cohesive and well-resourced strategy on violence against children; to promote coordinated policy interventions and overcome the dispersion and poor enforcement of pieces of legislation; to consolidate data and research; and enhance investment in family support, capacity-building of professionals and safe and child-sensitive mechanisms.

7. The urgency of protecting children from violence has clearly not diminished. Indeed, the magnitude and impact of this phenomenon remain high level and deeply distressing. For countless children, life is defined by one word: fear. In their early years and throughout adolescence, children endure violent disciplinary practices in schools, in care and justice institutions and within the home. Armed and community violence undermines their daily life and development; millions of children experience violence in work settings, including domestic work; trafficking is on the increase; in some countries, inhuman sentencing is still imposed on boys and girls; and harmful practices persist, with long-lasting consequences for children's rights.

8. Violence and deprivation are strongly interconnected and pave the way towards high risk of poor health, poor school performance and long-term welfare dependency. But beyond the cost to each individual victim, violence has serious costs for households, communities and national economies.

9. As noted in paragraph 91 of the report to the Secretary-General on the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda, entitled "Realizing the future we want for all":[1]

> The prevention and reduction of all forms of violence and abuse — and protection against their specific manifestations, including trafficking in human beings, torture, organized crime, the press-ganging of children, drug-related criminality, sexual abuse and labour exploitation — should be at the heart of any agenda which fully recognizes the centrality of human security, both as a human rights imperative and as integral to development.

[1] Available from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/Post_2015_UNTTreport.pdf.

Similarly the Secretary-General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in its report[2] recognizes freedom from violence as a fundamental human right, and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies, and calls for the elimination of all forms of violence against children.

10. Capitalizing on the increasing international attention given to this topic and the momentum generated by the recommendations of the study, over the reporting period, the Special Representative undertook significant initiatives to rally firm support and step up progress in children's protection from violence. First, as reflected in section II.A below, she undertook significant efforts to mainstream the protection of children from violence in the policy agenda, including through the promotion of ratification and implementation of international standards. Second, as highlighted in section II.B, the Special Representative pursued initiatives to enhance awareness and consolidate knowledge on violence prevention and responses, through the organization of expert consultations and the development of thematic studies. Third, as presented in section II.C, significant developments were promoted to reinforce institutional collaboration with regional organizations and institutions; and, finally, as discussed in section II.D, strategic alliances were further strengthened within and beyond the United Nations system to accelerate progress in ensuring children's protection from violence.

11. Since the start of the mandate, to support national initiatives and bring it closer to national stakeholders and the public at large, the Special Representative conducted over 90 missions in more than 50 countries in all regions. Country visits provided a valuable opportunity to advance implementation of the recommendations of the study and address a wide range of concerns through (a) high-level policy discussions with national authorities, (b) awareness-raising and advocacy initiatives with professional groups, civil society partners and children and young people and (c) media encounters. The visits have helped to promote acceleration of progress in the universal ratification of human rights treaties, the enactment and enforcement of legislation designed to ban all forms of violence and safeguard the protection of child victims, and the consolidation of data and research to be used to inform policymaking, as well as initiatives to prevent children's exposure to violence in the home, in schools and in care and justice institutions, or as associated with harmful practices and community violence.

A. Widening the human rights foundation for children's freedom from violence

United Nations campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

12. Children's freedom from violence is a fundamental human right recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child[3] and the Optional Protocols thereto,[4] and addressed by other important international standards. The ratification and effective

[2] Available from http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/UN-Report.pdf. See annex II, goal 11, at p. 52.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

[4] Ibid., vols. 2171 and 2173, No. 27531, and General Assembly resolution 66/138, annex.

implementation of these treaties constitute a crucial step towards promoting prevention and elimination of violence and protecting children from violence.

13. The United Nations campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols is a major initiative in this area. Launched in May 2010 by the Secretary-General, the campaign is supported by the Special Representative, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

14. The goal of universal ratification has been widely endorsed by Member States, national institutions and civil society partners, as well as regional organizations. For example, the Council of Europe launched a campaign to stop sexual violence against children, featuring the ratification of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography[5] as a core component.

15. Since the launch of the campaign, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography[5] received 26 additional ratifications and is currently in force in 163 countries. Of the 30 States that are not yet parties to the Protocol, the majority made formal commitments to ratification in the framework of the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Rights of the Child or other human rights mechanisms; and the large majority have ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementary to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,[6] and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182),[7] of the International Labour Organization, which address similar areas of concern.

16. The campaign will continue to build on the momentum created to reach universal ratification. The 2013 United Nations Treaty Event, organized in conjunction with the high-level segment of the General Assembly, marks a critical stage in this process, with its prominent attention to the rights of the child.

17. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure[8] is another important legal instrument promoted by the Special Representative. The Protocol was adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2011 and as of 26 July 2013, it had been ratified by 6 States and signed by 37.

18. The Protocol recognizes children's legal standing with respect to seeking redress for the violation of their rights — either directly or through a representative. To promote its implementation, domestic remedies and child-sensitive procedures and mechanisms need to be in place, including ombuds for children or similar national independent human rights institutions. Similarly, child-sensitive procedures and legal safeguards need to be established to ensure respect for the best interests and the views of the child, to protect children's privacy and prevent the risk of ill-treatment or intimidation.

[5] Ibid., vol. 2171, No. 27531.

[6] Ibid., vol. 2237, No. 39574. Adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/25.

[7] Ibid., vol. 2133, No. 37245.

[8] General Assembly resolution 66/138, annex.

19. Widespread public information, awareness-raising and education campaigns and capacity-building of professionals working with and for children are crucial to making the provisions of the Protocol widely known and facilitating access to relevant information by all those concerned, including children.

20. To support children's understanding of the Protocols, the Special Representative, in cooperation with partners, is preparing child-friendly versions of these treaties, utilizing simple concepts and information to enable children to make use of their provisions in a safe and effective manner.

21. The Special Representative promotes the swift ratification and implementation of these Protocols at the global, regional and national levels. In November 2012, she joined in the organization of regional meetings on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure: the first was hosted in Ankara by the Government of Turkey, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and UNICEF; and the second was held in Cairo and organized by the League of Arab States.

22. These regional meetings constitute a strategic platform for mobilizing support for ratification and implementation, aligning national legislation with the provisions of the Protocol and providing for child-sensitive procedures for counselling, reporting and complaints, which can be safely used by children without any risk of violence or manipulation.

Protecting children from trafficking

23. As noted in paragraph 79 of one part of the study (see A/61/299), trafficking is associated with different forms of violence: abduction or deception by recruiters, sexual violence perpetuated as the victims are transferred to their destination, and being held captive, frequently accompanied by violence, while waiting for "job" placement. Most victims are trafficked into violent situations.

24. With this in mind, the Special Representative pursued close collaboration with United Nations and regional partners, including advocacy for the ratification and implementation of international standards. This process is supported by the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons[9] and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. By July 2013, this Protocol had been ratified by 156 countries, and more than 130 countries had legislation criminalizing trafficking. Yet, the number of convictions remains low.[10]

25. Particularly worrisome is the fact that child trafficking has been on the increase: between 2007 and 2010, 27 per cent of detected victims were children. Of every three child victims, two are girls and one is a boy[11] and, in some regions, children's exposure to this form of violence is particularly high.[12]

26. The Special Representative will continue to work with child protection partners for the ratification and strong enforcement of these standards, supporting

[9] General Assembly resolution 64/293, annex.

[10] See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2012* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.IV.1), p. 7, key findings.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid. In Africa and the Middle East, approximately 68 per cent of victims were children (ibid., p. 10).

legal reform, awareness-raising and social mobilization to prevent child trafficking and safeguard the rights of child victims.

Protection from violence associated with domestic work

27. The ratification of the Decent Work for Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) of the International Labour Organization has been a core component of the Special Representative's agenda. This treaty requires States to set a minimum age for domestic work and ensure that work by young domestic workers over the minimum age does not interfere with their education; and calls for the protection of domestic workers from all forms of abuse, harassment and violence.

28. Children engaged in domestic work, most of them girls, are highly vulnerable to violence. According to ILO estimates contained in the publication *Ending Child Labour in Domestic Work and Protecting Young Workers for Abusive Working Conditions*, there may be as many as 100 million domestic workers worldwide, 15.5 million of whom are children.[13] Most of them work as housekeepers, nannies or caregivers, and many are also migrants who hope to support their families through their remittances. Often isolated, with no formal protection structure, child domestic workers are highly vulnerable to labour exploitation, through having to work long hours without rest, being denied holidays or being deprived of wages, as well as to serious manifestations of violence and abuse.

29. In the same publication, ILO expresses special concern at the largely hidden nature of domestic work and its strong association with incidents of violence. Name-calling, threats, shouting and screaming, beating, kicking, whipping, scalding, overwork and denial of food, and sexual harassment and abuse are some of the incidents acknowledged in the report. If they become pregnant, girls may be dismissed and find themselves on the streets, afraid to return home.[14]

30. The Special Representative will continue to join hands with partners for the swift ratification and implementation of ILO standards, for legal reform and for the consolidation of data and research on child workers' exposure to violence. The third Global Conference on Child Labour, to be held in Brasilia in October 2013, will provide a significant platform for advancing this cause.

Protecting children from enforced disappearances

31. The protection of children from enforced disappearances has gained renewed attention in 2013 with the adoption of the general comment on children and enforced disappearances by the Human Rights Council Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances at its ninety-eighth session, held from 31 October to 9 November 2012 (A/HRC/WGEID/98/1 and Corr.1). The general comment is the fruit of close collaboration between the Working Group and the Special Representative. It recognizes enforced disappearances of children as an extreme form of violence, preventable in all of its forms and unjustifiable under any circumstance.

[13] See International Labour Organization, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), *Ending Child Labour in Domestic Work and Protecting Young Workers from Abusive Working Conditions* (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2013).

[14] Ibid., pp. 34-37.

32. Child victims may be personally subject to enforced disappearance or may be born in captivity of a mother subject to enforced disappearance or victimized as a result of the fact that one of their parents, relatives or legal guardians are subject to this human rights violation. Children living and/or working on the street or placed in institutions may also be at special risk.

33. The prevention of enforced disappearances is closely dependent on the effective enforcement of international standards on the administration of justice, including those prohibiting children's unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, securing children's prompt access to legal aid and appropriate assistance, providing measures that are alternatives to deprivation of liberty, and safeguarding the right to challenge the legality of a child's detention. Deprivation of liberty should occur only in officially recognized places of detention, where the registration of children is secured, duly updated and effectively monitored by relevant oversight mechanisms and independent supervision.

34. The protection of children from enforced disappearances is a concern that was raised by the Special Representative in her field visits. To prevent and address this serious form of violence, it is critical to promote child-sensitive truth-seeking and redress measures, as well as comprehensive psychological care and support for the long-lasting reintegration of child victims. Moreover, child-friendly procedures need to be in place to secure children's genuine participation in proceedings, to support the child with information that he or she can fully understand and to prevent the risk of revictimization.

B. Enhancing awareness and consolidating knowledge

35. The organization of expert consultations and the development of thematic studies, key features in the agenda of the Special Representative, are designed to widen support for children's protection from violence; generate concern about the harmful effects of this phenomenon; promote behavioural and societal change; and ensure that progress is achieved in implementing the study's recommendations.

36. Eight expert consultations have been held so far.[15] Gathering leading experts from within and beyond the United Nations system, and building upon sound research and strategic experiences in different regions, they have helped to enhance understanding of the root causes of and risk factors for violence, identify good practices, and enable the presentation of policy recommendations to assist Governments in their national implementation efforts.

37. In this regard, the Special Representative issued several thematic reports:[16] on safe and child-sensitive counselling, reporting and complaint mechanisms for addressing violence against children; tackling violence in schools; protecting children from harmful practices in plural legal systems; and preventing and responding to violence against children within the juvenile justice system. A new report on restorative justice for children is forthcoming.

[15] Further information on the eight expert consultations organized by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General is available from http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/knowledge.

[16] Available from http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/publications.

38. These studies have triggered important policy developments at the international, regional and national levels. The study on child-sensitive mechanisms has become an influential reference point in respect of support for the implementation of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The report tackling violence in schools has generated significant policy discussions at the regional and national levels, most recently following the launch of its Spanish-language version during the Special Representative's visit to El Salvador.

39. The study on harmful practices was released to mark the first anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child, observed on 11 October 2012. Jointly developed with Plan International, in cooperation with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Union, it served as a reference with a sound perspective during the 2013 celebration of the Day of the African Child, devoted to the theme: "Eliminating harmful social and cultural practices affecting children: our collective responsibility". The study will frame additional regional initiatives to support the abandonment of harmful practices, including the consultation organized with the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC) (an apex body of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)) in September 2013 in Bhutan.

40. The joint report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Special Representative on prevention of and responses to violence against children within the juvenile justice system was launched with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Governments of Austria and Thailand during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. These partners also participated in the presentation of the study to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in April 2013. As a follow-up, the Commission called for an open-ended intergovernmental expert group to develop model strategies and practical measures on the elimination of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. The expert meeting will be hosted by the Government of Thailand.[17]

41. As addressed below, during the reporting period, the Special Representative convened two important expert meetings, on violence in early childhood; and restorative justice for children. Preparatory work was also initiated on the protection of children from gang and armed violence, and on opportunities and risks associated with the use of information and communications technologies, to be addressed by upcoming expert consultations.

1. Prevention and elimination of violence in early childhood

42. The study called for the protection from violence of children in their early years, and recognized the crucial importance of positive parenting, home visitation, and early childhood care and development programmes (see box II).

43. Early childhood is a fundamental stage in children's development, and offers a strategic opportunity to prevent violence and break the cycle of abuse affecting children. In early years, incidents of violence often occur in the privacy of the

[17] See the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on the twenty-second session (*Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2013, Supplement No. 10* and corrigendum) (E/2013/30 and Corr.1).

household and may have an irreversible effect on children's development and future life; and it is particularly hard for very young victims to expose these situations or seek help. These risks are heightened when children are placed in residential care.

Box II
UNICEF call to action: ending the placement of children under 3 in institutions[a]

UNICEF urged Governments in the Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean regions to prevent the separation of children under age 3 from their families and to end children's placement in institutional care.

The call to action is framed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.[b] It recognizes that placement in residential care has a detrimental impact on the health, physical and cognitive development and emotional security of very young people; and recommends five core interventions:

- Legislative changes and strict conditions for placement in institutional care, which should be a last resort.
- Allocation of resources to support vulnerable families and promote family-based services to prevent the separation from their families of children under age 3, and provide special attention to children with disabilities.
- Capacity-building and standards of practice for child protection actors involved with children at risk of being deprived of their families.
- Information and sensitization campaigns to promote social inclusion of children deprived of parental care and children with disabilities.
- Mechanisms for monitoring the conditions of, and responses to, children deprived of family care.

[a] Issued by the UNICEF Regional Offices for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia and for Latin America and the Caribbean.
[b] General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex.

44. Significant research highlights the serious impact of violence on young children, including on their brain development. There is also sound evidence on the valuable contribution of early childhood initiatives to the prevention of violence, as well as to the reduction of inequalities and the prevention of discrimination and social exclusion.

45. To capitalize on this potential, in late 2012, the Special Representative convened an expert consultation in cooperation with the Government of Peru, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNICEF and the Global Movement for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting included the participation of a cross-regional group of experts, including young people, and highlighted the urgency of:

- Promoting strong political engagement to prevent and reduce violence in the life of young children, supported by a national strategy and by public policies well coordinated across governmental departments and between central and decentralized authorities. Countries should designate a high-level government institution, well versed in early childhood concerns, as responsible for the prevention of and response to violence against children and with the capacity to involve multiple sectors, and secure adequate funding and effective monitoring and evaluation of results and impact.
- Strengthening the legal protection of young children from violence through a comprehensive legal ban on all forms of violence in all settings, and measures to ensure redress, recovery and reintegration of child victims and fight impunity.
- Ensuring gender-sensitive approaches and child-sensitive support to young children through well-resourced institutions and services and well-trained professionals, taking into account children's perceptions and experiences.
- Supporting families and caregivers in their child-rearing responsibilities and securing a responsive national child protection system to strengthen families' capacity to raise young children in safe environments and prevent child abandonment and placement in residential care, with special attention to young children at risk.
- Consolidating data and research to measure progress in young children's exposure to violence, supported by funding for impact evaluations of relevant programmes.
- Raising the profile of early childhood initiatives in the policy agenda and in the public debate and widening awareness about the high return of investment in early childhood initiatives and the social cost of inaction; and promoting a change in attitudes and behaviour that condone violence against young children, including when pursued in the form of discipline or education or in other harmful forms.
- Enhancing international, regional and bilateral cooperation to promote cross-fertilization of experiences, address persistent challenges and mobilize vigorous support for young children's protection from violence.

2. Promoting restorative justice for children

46. In June 2013, the Special Representative joined the Governments of Indonesia and Norway in the organization of an expert consultation on restorative justice for children.

47. The meeting, held in Bali, reviewed different models of restorative justice for children, as well as national legislation and experiences, including those promoted in Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa and Thailand (see box III).

48. The primary purpose of restorative justice is just that — to restore justice. Within families, schools, communities, organizations, civil society and the State, it provides peaceful conflict resolution and contributes to democratic peaceful societies. Restorative justice can take many forms, including mediation,

conciliation, conferencing and sentencing circles. Common to all approaches is the focus on healing, respect and strengthened relationships.

49. In the context of the criminal justice system, child-sensitive restorative justice may involve bringing together the victim, the offender, his or her parents or guardians, child protection and justice actors, and the community, in a safe and structured environment. Through a non-adversarial and voluntary process, based on dialogue, negotiation and problem-solving, restorative justice aims to rehabilitate and reintegrate the young offender, through helping to reconnect him or her with the community, and ensuring that the offender understands the harm caused to the victim and the community and acknowledges accountability for criminal behaviour and reparation of its consequences.

50. Restorative justice promotes a paradigm shift: rather than assess how much punishment is inflicted, it measures how much harm is repaired or how much recurrence of violence is prevented through an effective process of reintegration of young offenders into society.

51. This process is framed by significant international standards on the protection of the rights of children involved with the criminal justice system.[18] The Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognizes the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth so as to reinforce the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others, taking into account the age of the child and the desirability of promoting his or her social reintegration, and his or her assumption of a constructive role in society (article 40 (1)). The Convention encourages the establishment of a separate justice system specifically applicable to children (article 40 (3)); anticipates measures to deal with the child without resorting to judicial proceedings, provided that human rights and legal safeguards are fully respected (article 40 (3) (b)); and foresees a variety of dispositions to ensure that children are dealt with in a manner appropriate to their well-being, and proportionate both to their circumstances and to the offence (article 40 (4)).

52. The Economic and Social Council adopted basic principles on the use of restorative justice, encouraging the development of mediation, conciliation, conferencing and sentencing circles as an effective alternative to formal criminal justice mechanisms.[19]

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[18] These include the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) (General Assembly resolution 40/33, annex); the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) (Assembly resolution 45/112, annex); Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Assembly resolution 45/113, annex); and the Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System (Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/30, annex).

[19] See, for example, Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/26 of 28 July 1999 on the development and implementation of mediation and restorative justice measures in criminal justice; Council resolution 1998/23 of 28 July 1998 on international cooperation aimed at the reduction of prison overcrowding and the promotion of alternative sentencing; and Council resolution 1997/33 of 21 July 1997 on elements of responsible crime prevention: standards and norms.

Box III

A new paradigm and a new mindset: Indonesia adopts new legislation on restorative justice[a]

- The law is framed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and addresses children as offenders, as victims and as witnesses of crimes.
- Status offences are decriminalized.
- The minimum age of criminal responsibility is raised from 8 to 12 and marital status no longer constitutes grounds for treating the child as an adult.
- Children's right to legal counsel and other assistance and to access justice before an objective and impartial court and in closed proceedings is recognized, as is the right to humane treatment and freedom from torture and other inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment or punishment.
- Protection of privacy and confidentiality of the child's identity in public media is guaranteed.
- Arrest, detention or imprisonment can be used only as a last resort and for the shortest possible time.
- Only specialized personnel can handle cases of children involved with the justice system.
- Police, prosecutors and judges are required to prioritize diversion and restorative justice in cases of an offence punishable with a sentence of imprisonment of up to a maximum of seven years and when the child is not a recidivist.
- Legislation provides a variety of sentencing options, including admonishment, non-institutional and institutional treatment, social services, supervision and vocational training.

[a] Law No. 11/2012 will enter into force in 2014.

53. The Bali meeting adopted important policy recommendations, highlighting the following areas:

Legislation

- States should undertake a comprehensive legislative review to align relevant domestic legislation, whether in statutory, customary or religious laws, with human rights standards; in countries with plural legal systems, the supremacy of legislation aligned with international human rights standards should be explicitly recognized in the law to avert potential conflicts in legal interpretation and implementation.
- Legislation should decriminalize status offences and survival behaviours and include legal safeguards to protect the child's best interests, and the child's

right to freedom from violence and discrimination, to free and safe participation in proceedings throughout the restorative justice process, and to legal and other relevant assistance.

- Legislation should provide law enforcement, prosecutors and the judiciary with options for diverting children away from the criminal justice system and promoting restorative justice processes at all stages of the proceedings; it should include alternative and educative measures such as warning, probation, judicial supervision and community work, to be applied in combination with restorative justice processes or when restorative justice is not appropriate. Children's right to recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration should be firmly expressed in legislation.

- Legislation should recognize that restorative justice and informal justice or conflict resolution mechanisms, while being accessible at the local and community levels and playing an important role in the protection and reintegration of children, should never jeopardize children's rights or preclude children from accessing the formal justice system.

Training and guidance

- Effective training should be assured to all relevant law enforcement and justice actors, including the police, prosecutors, the judiciary, probation officers, lawyers, social workers, facilitators and mediators. It should provide skills to promote dialogue, manage emotions and conflict, and secure safety of child participants; and address child rights and relevant legislation, as well as diversion, restorative justice processes and other alternative non-custodial measures. Guidelines and standard operational procedures should be developed for professionals involved in this process.

Coordination, adequate resources, data and research

- Coordination between restorative justice service providers and justice actors should be institutionalized at the national and local levels, and close cooperation should be encouraged between relevant stakeholders. Availability of a sufficient number of well-trained professionals in the area of restorative justice should be secured. Data, research and evaluation of restorative justice programmes for children should be promoted as a critical dimension of this process to safeguard the best interests of the child at all times, promote the child's reintegration and prevent violence and recidivism.

Awareness-raising and social mobilization

- Awareness-raising campaigns should be undertaken at the national and local levels with relevant stakeholders, including traditional and religious leaders and the media, to enhance understanding of restorative justice and promote child-friendly attitudes among justice professionals and service providers, and to sensitize the general public to the importance of restorative justice processes.

- The role of civil society organizations in the implementation of restorative justice programmes should be promoted; furthermore, mapping and mobilizing

local resources and community volunteers should be encouraged for successful implementation at the community level.

3. Protecting children affected by armed and gang violence

54. The protection of children from the impact of armed and gang violence is another priority for the second term of the Special Representative's mandate. In cooperation with strategic partners, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and UNICEF, research work has been advanced in anticipation of an expert consultation in 2014.

55. Incidents of violence in the community, violence associated with criminal activities and violence occurring in the privacy of the home often become deeply interconnected. They cause fear, insecurity and harm to families, communities and society in general. Children are hard hit, both as victims and as witnesses.

56. Adolescent boys are at high risk of homicide as a result of participation in violence-prone activities, such as street fighting, street crime, gang membership and possession of weapons. For girls, the incidence of inter-partner violence is particularly high, and in many nations, family-related homicide is the major cause of female deaths.

57. Violence associated with gang violence, including extortion, physical violence, homicides and disappearances, dramatically hamper childhood and adolescent development. It compromises access to education and health services, recreation and social support, and is associated with lower levels of school enrolment and retention, and higher levels of poverty. In turn, deprivation aggravates the risk of increased levels of domestic violence and children's vulnerability.

58. Those belonging to the poorest sectors or coming from regions where gang activity is prevalent end up being stigmatized and perceived as delinquents, with enhanced risk of criminalization, and limited options for protection and genuine reintegration.

59. This situation is at times aggravated by the impact of migration. As highlighted during the Special Representative's visit to El Salvador, in June 2013, 40 per cent of Salvadoran children live with only one or even without any parent, as a result of migration or abandonment by their family. In many cases, deprivation is the norm at home, with one in every two children living in poverty, and with limited access to social services of quality to prevent and respond to violence.

60. Children from disadvantaged communities are attractive targets for organized criminal activities. Through coercion, social pressure or the promise of financial reward, they are at risk of being recruited or manipulated to hold or deliver drugs or weapons, to carry out petty crime, to beg on the streets or to become involved in other exploitative activities.

61. Public fear of gang violence and youth crime has generated social pressure for the criminalization of children and adolescents, lower minimum ages of criminal responsibility and longer sentences of imprisonment. This has been accompanied by media stigmatization of children from disadvantaged groups and a culture of tolerance of violence against them. In this process, poor rule of law and weak law enforcement performance, together with public fear of retaliation, lead to sporadic convictions and a deep sense of impunity.

62. These various concerns were given special attention in the field visits conducted by the Special Representative and will continue to be addressed in 2014.

4. Opportunities and risks associated with the use of new information and communications technologies

63. Information and communications technologies have developed at an increasingly rapid rate over the past two decades. They have brought with them enormous benefits and opportunities in terms of education, socialization and entertainment. Children and adolescents master these new technologies with ease and expertise, exploring opportunities for accessing information. Such technologies support decision-making, promote creativity and innovation and enhance social networks.

64. Yet, these technologies also generate new risks and can become a tool with which to perpetrate violence. Indeed, harmful information becomes available more easily and may also be spread more quickly, potentially reaching out to millions in a fraction of a second and remaining in cyberspace for a lifetime. As a result, children may be at risk of abuse, bullying, harassment and exploitation in ways that are often difficult to detect and address, including by parents, caregivers, teachers and others (see box IV).

Box IV

EU Kids Online:[a] In their own words: what bothers children online?

According to EU Kids Online research released in 2013, pornography (22 per cent) and violent content (18 per cent) top children's online concerns. Children reveal shock, fear and disgust on seeing cruelty, killings and abuse; since much is real rather than fictional violence, this adds to the depth of children's reaction. Boys appear more bothered by violent content, including violence, aggression and gory content, while girls fear more contact-related risks. While younger children are more concerned about violent content, concerns about bullying and unwanted sharing of information, images or photos increase with age, and they are linked in children's minds to the use of social networking sites.

[a] EU Kids Online is a thematic network that promotes research on understanding children's online experiences. See http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Reports/Intheirownwords020213.pdf.

65. In order to build on the growing body of knowledge and experience, and to accelerate progress in ensuring children's online protection from violence, over the next several months, the Special Representative will organize with strategic partners a consultation on information and communications technology and children's protection from violence. The consultation will provide a strategic platform for learning from and building upon initiatives undertaken by national Governments, United Nations organizations, international and regional organizations, academia, independent children's rights institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations, including children and young people.

66. Child online protection and cybersecurity also constitute a priority topic to be addressed by the Special Representative at the Global Youth Summit, to be hosted in September 2013 by the Government of Costa Rica, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Young people will be closely associated with this initiative, both by attending in person and by joining the interactive discussions through online webcast and social media channels. Building upon the outcomes of the summit, ITU plans to review its Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection and launch a global campaign to raise awareness among young people on how to manage their online information.

C. Reinforcing regional processes in support of national implementation efforts

67. The strengthening of collaboration with regional organizations and institutions has been a cornerstone of the Special Representative's strategy to accelerate progress in the implementation of the study recommendations. These critical partnerships have helped in maximizing the engagement with Governments and in developing policy platforms to promote cross-fertilization of experiences, sustaining and further consolidating national action for children's protection from violence, and mobilizing support for overcoming persisting challenges and the steady pursuit of the implementation of this critical agenda.

68. This process has led to significant results:[20]

- First, the hosting of high-level regional consultations to review progress in the implementation of the study recommendations.
- Second, the adoption of regional political declarations and agendas for action tailored to the specific reality of each region and designed to achieve concrete goals in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children.
- Third, the development of comprehensive regional studies to take stock of laws, policies and institutions safeguarding children from violence and identifying gaps and opportunities for accelerated progress. "The Comparative Arab Report on implementing the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against children" and the regional mappings conducted in South and Central America are sound outcomes of this process. As noted below, in 2013, a new study was issued on the process in the Caribbean.[21]
- These strategic partnerships opened up avenues for strengthening cross-regional cooperation, including South-South cooperation. In this regard, in 2011 and 2012, the Special Representative hosted two high-level round tables

[20] Regional partnerships include the League of Arab States, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC)/SAARC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through its Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), MERCOSUR, Central American countries (Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic), the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

[21] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/event/2012-05-14_457.

with regional organizations and institutions, on the occasion of the General Assembly debate on the rights of the child. One tangible outcome of this process was the development of an information hub to support knowledge-sharing and access to information on the follow-up to the study.

69. Over the reporting period, additional developments helped to further strengthen the collaboration with regional organizations.

Central American Integration System

70. In June 2013, the Special Representative held a high-level meeting with the Central American Integration System (SICA), to discuss strategic areas of cooperation on children's protection from violence, and to promote the mainstreaming of this concern in the SICA agenda. The meeting was provided with information from the regional road map on violence against children for the Central American region, adopted in December 2012, in Santo Domingo.

71. SICA and the Special Representative agreed to enhance collaboration on the promotion of the rule of law, restorative justice programmes, and public policies for violence prevention; and to enhance cooperation on early childhood initiatives, including in the framework of the Regional Conference for the Prevention of Violence Starting in Early Childhood (Panama, August 2013).

Caribbean Community

72. As a follow-up to the 2012 regional consultation on violence against children, hosted by the Government of Jamaica in cooperation with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Special Representative,[21] a regional study was released in 2013 on the process of implementation of policies in the Caribbean.

73. In this connection, CARICOM established a task force for child protection and child rights to accelerate progress in children's protection from violence. The Task Force, composed of the CARICOM secretariat, UNICEF and civil society partners, as well as the Special Representative, adopted a plan of action for 2013-2014 aimed at the protection of children against violence, abuse, exploitation, child labour, discrimination and neglect in CARICOM members and associated members. The plan of action mainstreams the implementation of the study recommendations and the road map on violence against children, adopted by the 2012 regional consultation. Strategic goals include the ratification of the three Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the adoption of an explicit legal prohibition of all forms of violence against children; the promotion of a comprehensive plan to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence; the consolidation of national data and research; and the establishment of a specialized juvenile justice system to strengthen children's protection from violence and ensure their reintegration in society.

74. The Bridgetown Declaration and Agenda for Action to Combat Child Sexual Abuse in the Caribbean,[22] adopted in Barbados on 21 November 2012, was another important initiative in the region. The Declaration reaffirms the commitment of Governments and civil society organizations to end child sexual abuse, and sets an

[22] See http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/document/_668.

agenda for action to achieve progress, including through the ratification of the Optional Protocols and initiatives to promote a culture of zero tolerance of violence.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

75. In June 2013, the Special Representative and the Rapporteur on the Rights of the Child of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights met in Washington, D.C., to enhance their collaboration. They agreed to further strengthen their cooperation on children's protection from violence, including through joint advocacy and awareness-raising and the development of thematic reports, including on the right of the child to a family environment, and the impact of organized armed violence on children.

South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC)

76. Important initiatives have been promoted in the framework of cooperation with SAIEVAC/SAARC member States, including a regional meeting on the elimination of harmful practices affecting children, held in Bhutan, in September 2013; and a course on "the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization child labour conventions: towards greater coherence in reporting and action", held in Turin, Italy, in June 2013, and jointly promoted by the Special Representative, SAIEVAC and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization.

77. This capacity-building programme addressed international human rights and labour standards on children's protection from violence in the framework of the SAIEVAC workplan for 2010-2015. With the participation of government officials of South Asia, representatives from civil society and workers' and employers' organizations, the meeting shared experiences of model interventions for addressing child labour and enhancing protection from violence, and explored opportunities to promote synergies among monitoring, reporting and planning mechanisms at the regional and national levels. Discussions also focused on the preparation of a South Asia child labour strategy for the third Global Conference on Child Labour, to be held, as mentioned above, in Brazil in October 2013.

Council of Europe

78. The Special Representative further strengthened her cooperation with the Council of Europe. In the framework of the Council's strategy for 2012-2015, which includes the elimination of violence against children as a core component, in November 2012, she co-organized, with the Council of Europe and UNICEF, the European conference on "Stepping up progress in combating violence against children", hosted by the Turkish Government in Ankara.

79. The meeting provided a strategic occasion to take stock of the situation of violence against children in Council of Europe member States and to enhance progress in the development of integrated national strategies. The key findings from the global progress survey conducted by the Special Representative, to which 27 Council of Europe member States have contributed, constituted a key reference for this process. Important national experiences on tackling violence against children were shared, through both government and civil society initiatives, making possible a richly productive process of learning and cross-fertilization across the region.

D. Strengthening strategic alliances to accelerate progress

1. Enhancing partnerships with Governments

80. Strategic collaboration with Governments has been crucial to advancing progress in the implementation of the study recommendations across regions. Member States have been active supporters of the process of ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards on the protection of children from violence, and key players in the organization of regional consultations and the shaping of regional and national policy frameworks for the prevention and elimination of violence against children. As a result, children's protection from violence has gained visibility in the policy agenda and in the public debate, as highlighted directly below.

National integrated strategy

81. As noted in the Special Representative's 2012 annual report (A/67/230, paras. 50-78), countries in every region have taken steps to develop national integrated strategies to prevent and eliminate violence against children. In 2007, 47 States had established a national agenda on violence against children; currently, more than 80 have such a policy framework, either comprising specific action plans on violence, or constituting a component of broad national child protection strategies.

82. Ghana, for example, completed its national plan of action on violence against children, 2008-2012; Jamaica adopted a national plan of action for an integrated response to children and violence, 2011-2016; Lebanon finalized a national strategy to prevent and protect children from violence; and Belgium developed an action plan on child abuse, violence and mistreatment. The first national programme on child protection (2011-2015) established by Viet Nam gives priority attention to children at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse. With special emphasis on economically disadvantaged areas and those where high proportions of ethnic minorities live, the plan aims to establish child protection systems in half of the country's provinces and cities by 2015.

83. The Special Representative promotes the development of a national integrated strategy on violence against children through advocacy and policy dialogue and in her field visits. This was also a strategic goal of her visit to Norway in June 2013. The visit coincided with the parliament's review of the Government's white paper on violence in close relationships, in the course of which the Special Representative highlighted strategic areas for further action (see box V).

Box V

White paper of the Government of Norway

The white paper, developed by the Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Ministries of Children, Equality and Integration and of Health, provides sound evidence which can inform policy action for preventing and addressing children's exposure to different and cumulative manifestations of violence: physical and emotional violence, sexual abuse, material and economic violence, and situations where children live in a violent environment.

The recommendations, unanimously adopted by the parliament, highlight in particular: the need for better cooperation and coordination between governmental agencies and levels of administration; the consolidation of data and research on children's exposure to violence, including nationwide surveys every five years and studies on the cost of violence and return of investment in prevention; the enhancement of expertise on violence among support services, including schools and health centres; the strengthening of the network and capacity of children's houses in addressing violence; and the development of a national strategy on violence and sexual abuse against children for the period 2014-2017.

Legal protection of children

84. Significant progress has also been made in legislative processes aiming at the prohibition of violence and at securing children's protection. A large majority of countries have some form of legislation on violence, either an overall prohibition, or separate pieces of legislation focusing on distinct manifestations. When the study was released, 16 nations had enacted a comprehensive prohibition on violence, including corporal punishment within the home; at present 34 countries have an all-encompassing ban on violence against children, at times enshrined in the constitution itself. This process continues to gain ground. Currently, legislative processes are under way in a number of States with which the Special Representative maintains close cooperation, including Brazil, Peru and the Philippines. These initiatives are expected to widen the number of countries with a comprehensive legal ban on violence, and help strengthen violence prevention and children's effective protection.

85. Legislative review is a high priority for the Special Representative on her field missions. The visit to Maldives in June 2013 provided a strategic occasion to advocate for the swift completion of legislative reforms under way so as to bring national legislation in conformity with international child rights treaties, especially in the area of juvenile justice, and for the introduction of a comprehensive legal prohibition of violence as a form of sentencing, as well as violence within the home, and in care and justice institutions.

2. Strengthening collaboration within the United Nations system

86. Institutional collaboration within the United Nations system, including among funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, and human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, has been central for raising awareness and mobilizing global support for children's protection from violence, and for mainstreaming this topic within United Nations activities. With mutually supportive mandates, connecting normative and operational organizations, all partners are united, based on a common human rights perspective, in their determination to build a violence-free world.

87. The promotion of children's freedom from violence remained a priority for the Special Representative in United Nations intergovernmental forums. In 2013, she joined policy discussions in three important bodies: the Human Rights Council, at its annual day of discussion on the rights of the child, devoted to the right to health, including prevention of violence; the Commission on the Status of Women, with its important commitments to addressing violence against women and girls; and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, which called for the drafting of model strategies and practical measures on violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. These discussions were critical to further mainstreaming children's protection from violence in the United Nations agenda.

88. Decisive steps were taken with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and other United Nations partners in support of the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The special focus of the 2013 United Nations Treaty Event in the General Assembly on the rights of the child has helped to further enhance this strategic collaboration.

89. The Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children has remained a crucial institutional collaboration mechanism in support of the Special Representative's mandate. The periodic meetings of the Working Group are a key forum for consultation, policy formulation and mainstreaming of violence against children within the United Nations agenda. Over the reporting period, this cooperation was of strategic relevance for the organization of the expert consultations on early childhood and on restorative justice for children.

90. The partnership with UNICEF has been further strengthened, both at Headquarters and in the field. UNICEF provided critical support to the Special Representative's field missions, the organization of regional and expert consultations, and the promotion of the global survey on violence against children.

91. In November 2012, the Special Representative participated in the UNICEF conference on "A better way to protect all children: the theory and practice of child protection systems", co-hosted with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children, and World Vision. The conference, held in New Delhi, brought together policymakers, academics and practitioners to review and consolidate lessons learned, explore new ideas and outline an agenda for the future, within which the protection of children from violence has a central place.

92. Cooperation with UNICEF was also pursued in support of the inclusion of children's protection from violence in the post-2015 global development agenda. This is a priority for the Special Representative, who further reaffirmed this critical

concern in the high-level event organized in March 2013 with the Governments of Canada, Liberia and Sweden and a network of civil society partners.

93. The protection of the rights of children with disabilities was another important area of cooperation (see box VI).

Box VI

The State of the World's Children 2013: Children with Disabilities[a]

The launch of the UNICEF 2013 report on *The State of the World's Children*, which was devoted to children with disabilities, provided a special opportunity to highlight children's vulnerability to violence. The launch of the report coincided with the Special Representative's mission to Finland in June 2013 and offered a special occasion to address this topic with UNICEF Finland and many governmental and civil society partners, as well as national human rights institutions responsible for the promotion of children's rights.

Important meetings were also held with children and young people, including the organization "Young developers". With their personal experience of child protection services, the members of the group work with local authorities to improve social services and promote children's rights. Through their active engagement in the capacity-building of staff, they advocate for a holistic approach to children's protection from violence, for better intersectoral collaboration and greater responsibility in the promotion of long-term interaction and planning with children in need of protection.

As highlighted in these meetings, children with disabilities are exposed to heightened risks of violence. Discrimination renders them disproportionately vulnerable to neglect and abuse, including sexual abuse. Moreover, stigma, marginalization, prejudices, misperceptions and invisibility of violence aggravate the chances of overlooking their positive potential. Risks are particularly serious when children with disabilities are separated from their families and placed in institutions, where they may be confronted with ill-trained staff, lack of adequate standards and weak monitoring systems.

[a] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XX.1.

94. Collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, human rights treaty bodies and special procedures of the Human Rights Council continued to feature highly in the Special Representative's agenda. In this regard, the collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child focused on the advancement of the global campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child; follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations in the context of field visits; and support to the development and implementation of general comments, especially No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health; No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business

sector on children's rights; and No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts.

95. Cooperation with the International Labour Organization served to highlight violence endured by children in settings where they work, advance implementation of the road map for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016, and prepare for the third Global Conference on Child Labour. While on mission in El Salvador, the Special Representative joined the Government and the International Labour Organization in commemorating the World Day against Child Labour, on 12 June, highlighting the situation of children in domestic work in the national and international context. The commemoration of the day was also promoted at an event in New York.

96. The Special Representative collaborates closely with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Youth and is a member of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. This partnership has opened up avenues for promoting the mainstreaming of freedom from violence into initiatives for adolescents, and identifying opportunities for joint actions designed to empower young people and secure their protection from violence.

97. In response to a call made by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues for consolidation of knowledge on violence against indigenous children, the Special Representative joined hands with UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Labour Organization in the development of the study entitled "Breaking the silence on violence against indigenous girls, adolescents and young women: a call to action based on an overview of existing evidence from Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America" (May 2013).

98. The study is guided by international standards and aims to break through the invisibility of violence. Recognizing the cumulative risks of violence faced by girls, adolescents and young women as a result of the convergence of risks associated with ethnicity, gender, age, disability, lack of parental care and other factors, the study reviews positive experiences and offers comprehensive recommendations for accelerating progress and inspiring further debate and action for the protection of indigenous girls and women from violence.

3. Consolidating cooperation with civil society

99. Consolidating cooperation with civil society has been critical to advancing the implementation of the study recommendations, and to promoting the ratification of child rights treaties, consolidating regional partnerships, informing thematic expert consultations and supporting field initiatives.

100. The International NGO Council on Violence against Children has played a crucial role in mobilization efforts at the international, regional and national levels, and in advocacy for violence prevention and elimination. Strategic collaboration was further strengthened with the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Working Group on Violence against Children, as well as with Child Helpline International and its wide cross-regional network.

101. The Special Representative pursued her collaboration with faith-based organizations to strengthen the protection of children from violence. The partnership

with the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children was further enhanced. Violence against children is the central theme for the World Day, initiated by a global movement of religious leaders and communities of all faiths and secular organizations committed to children's rights. On the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the movement promotes initiatives around the world to prevent and eliminate violence against children. In May 2013, the Special Representative participated in the World Day Council Meeting in Coimbatore, India, which committed to expanding its advocacy and mobilization work, including by strengthening partnerships with religious communities, secular organizations, civil society and Governments; enhancing interfaith collaboration; increasing young people's participation; and improving the use of media, including traditional and social media.

4. Widening alliances with children and young people and promoting child-friendly resources

102. Children's participation was a crucial dimension in the study and remains a core component of its follow-up process. Through field visits, regional initiatives and social media, the Special Representative consults with children and benefits from their views and perspectives. Participating in regional consultations, children have contributed to the regional road maps adopted by Governments to prevent and address violence against children. They also contributed to the global survey conducted by the Special Representative.

103. The Special Representative continues to support children in making their voices heard and in influencing the process leading up to the post-2015 global development agenda.

104. Young people have also been crucial partners in the campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In MERCOSUR, the June 2013 session of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and High Authorities on Human Rights included a meeting devoted to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, with the participation of a young Salvadoran, representing the Latin America Network of Children and Adolescents. In his address, he emphasized the crucial value of the Protocol to young people. Recognizing its special relevance for child victims of human rights violations, who desperately need to have access to justice and effective and safe remedies, he called on all States to speed up the ratification of the Protocol and to consolidate the protection of children's rights in the region.

105. The Special Representative continues to promote the access by children to information and advocacy materials which can help to prevent violence and enhance children's protection. A web tool for children and young people is under preparation for availability on the Special Representative's website, and child-friendly resources are being developed with easy and accessible information on international standards, including the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

III. Looking ahead

106. **This report presents an overview of strategic developments and results achieved by the Special Representative in advancing progress in the implementation of the study recommendations. Initiatives promoted over the reporting period have helped to further consolidate cross-regional commitments to children's protection from violence and strengthen advocacy, legal and policy action for violence prevention and elimination.**

107. **In line with the priorities anticipated for the second term of the mandate, enhanced efforts were promoted to anchor the study recommendations in the national policy agenda; to tackle emerging concerns, including those associated with the use of information and communications technologies; to safeguard freedom from violence in early childhood and across the child's life cycle, with priority attention to the most excluded; and to promote the inclusion of violence against children as a crucial dimension in the development agenda.**

108. **In this regard, the significant reflections of the past several months on the post-2015 agenda open up strategic avenues towards addressing violence against children as a global priority and cross-cutting concern.**

109. **The Special Representative will continue to mobilize support for these important efforts and for the identification of specific goals and indicators so as to accelerate progress in children's protection from violence. Indeed, it is high time to measure what we treasure! And if we are to succeed, it is critical that children and young people enjoy genuine participation in this process — not as accidental partners, but as real agents of change.**